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DE RUEHSJ #2737 3421545
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 081545Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6805
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SAN JOSE 002737

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CCA AND WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [CS](#)
SUBJECT: COSTA RICA: SUSPENSION OF TITLE III OF THE
LIBERTAD ACT

REF: A. STATE 191752

- [B](#). SAN JOSE 2223 (NOTAL)
- [C](#). SAN JOSE 1955

[1](#). Since returning to the presidency in May 2006, Costa Rican President Oscar Arias has been one of the region's leading critics of the Castro government and a strong advocate for democratic change and human rights reforms in Cuba. Costa Rica shows absolutely no signs that it would consider re-establishing diplomatic relations with the Castro government, which were severed in 1961. Opposition to oppressive regimes in general, and to those "in the neighborhood" in particular, are fully consistent with Costa Rica's well-developed democratic principles. The USG should encourage and bolster Costa Rica's continued support for democracy in Cuba. Therefore, suspending Title III of the Libertad Act in regard to Costa Rica remains in the USG national interest.

[2](#). During the latter half of 2006, Costa Rica continued its long-standing opposition to the Castro regime, sharpened by Arias's return to power. At Colombian President Uribe's inaugural in early August, Arias (unsuccessfully) tried to engage Cuban Council of Ministers VP Lage on the future of Cuba. In an August 29 Op-ed in the Miami Herald, Arias criticized Cuba as "the only exception in the great Latin American transformation toward liberty," described the government as "plain and simple, a dictatorship," and stressed that "the Cuban people deserve to choose their own destiny." Following a meeting in San Jose with USOAS Ambassador Maisto on September 29, (Ref B), Arias told the media that he would use international fora to continue to call for democracy in the entire hemisphere.

[3](#). At the same time, Costa Rica, in solidarity with other Latin American nations, has not been afraid to criticize USG policy on Cuba. Arias's op-ed called for an end to the U.S. embargo as a "strategic step" towards an orderly transition of power. The GOCR also continued to support calls in the UN General Assembly an end to the economic embargo. These tactics in no way reflect Costa Rican support for the Castro regime, but are rather a disagreement over tactics, i.e., how best to create the conditions for a democratic transition (Ref C).

[4](#). The following responses are keyed to Ref A questions:

- A) Post is unaware of any Costa Rican investments in Cuba.
- B) Post is unaware of any bilateral trade agreements between Costa Rica and Cuba.
- C) Scholarships to study medicine in Cuba have been offered to Costa Rican students in the past, but Post is unaware of any students who have accepted these scholarships, given the ready availability of public university programs in Costa

Rica. Post is unaware of any Costa Ricans who have traveled to Cuba for medical treatment, again given the availability of publicly subsidized health care in Costa Rica. At any given time, there are between six and ten Cuban doctors working in Costa Rican hospitals, most of them providing radiological treatment at Hospital Mexico in San Jose. One defected in early 2006 and was promptly granted residency in Costa Rica.

D) Costa Rica has worked to promote democracy and human rights in Cuba. These efforts include President Arias's public statements (see above).

E) Costa Rican Foreign Minister Bruno Stagno attended the 14th Non-Aligned Movement's Summit meeting in Havana in September. There were no/no high-level Cuban diplomatic visits to Costa Rica.

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